(d) by what time they are likely to be completed;

(e) whether National Highways Authority of India has agreed to abandon two projects at Vijayawada and Machilipatnam; and

(f) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Finance has been requested for considering assured flow of credit at reasonable interest rate to the projects in road sector. Government has decided to authorise the India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL) to raise Rs. 10,000 crore through tax-free bonds by 31.3.2009 to be used for refinancing bank lending of longer maturity to eligible infrastructure projects, including highways, in particular. Under this initiative, the IIFCL resources used for refinance would leverage bank financing of double the amount to support a PPP programme of Rs.100,000 crore in the highways sector.

(c) Work on the following five projects under National Highways Development Project (NHDP) Phase-V has not commenced on the scheduled appointed date, as these projects have not achieved the financial closure : (i) Surat-Dahisar, (ii) Panipat-Jalandhar, (iii) Chennai-Tada, (iv) Gurgaon-Jaipur and (v) Vijayawada-Chilakaluripet. The Government provides Viability Gap Funding (VGF) for projects undertaken on Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) basis. However, these five projects have been awarded on revenue sharing basis and do not require any VGF.

(d) The projects under NHDP Phase-V are scheduled for completion by December, 2012.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Does not arise.

Discussion to counter terrorism

*147. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM SUPRIYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Governments of India and Nepal have met and discussed the steps to counter-terror;

(b) if so, the main points discussed;

(c) whether effective cooperation for combating terrorist activities, including the activities of the Indian Insurgent Group operating from Nepal and the Himalayan nation being used as a major transit point for circulation of fake Indian currency notes in India, were also discussed;

(d) if so, the outcome of the talks held; and

(e) to what extent India and Nepal have taken steps to check the terror activities in both the countries?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) There has been a regular dialogue between the Government of India and the Government of Nepal on handling cross-border crimes and security concerns.

The institutionalized bilateral mechanism of Home Secretaries talks looks into these issues. The last round of Home Secretaries talks were held in New Delhi on October 31-November 1, 2008, in accordance with the decisions reached during the official visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal to India in September, 2008. During the Home Secretaries talks, both sides discussed enhancing ongoing efforts to control activities of criminal and anti-social elements along the India-Nepal border. They stressed the need for cooperation and information sharing between law enforcement agencies of both countries in combating trans-border crimes, and agreed to take measures for better coordination in intelligence sharing. In order to effectively counter the menace of fake currency, both sides agreed to initiate capacity building programmes to enhance the capability of enforcement agencies in this area and in tackling money laundering, cyber crime and financing of terrorism.

During the official visit of External Affairs Minister to Nepal from 24-26 November, 2008, both sides agreed to take necessary steps, based on agreements reached at the last round of Home Secretaries talks.

Coal shortage in NTPC

*148. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a coal shortage in the country and National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) and State Power firms have approached his Ministry to meet the shortage of coal in power projects;

(b) whether all the power projects have been facing coal shortage;

(c) whether the Board of Coal India Ltd. has approved a first ever proposal to import coal;

(d) if so, the total coal to be imported;

(e) the total requirements; and

(f) to what extent import of coal would meet the shortage?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): (a) and (b) As per Annual Plan 2008-09, Planning Commission envisaged some gap between estimated demand of coal for power utilities and source-wise availability including that from Coal India Limited (CIL) and Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL). Therefore, keeping in view estimated production and expected power generation targets as well as with a view to build the coal stocks at power plants, Ministry of Power was advised to retain last year's target of 20 million tonnes for imports by power utilities during 2008-09. Inspite of CIL and SCCL meeting